a court of competent jurisdiction has determined that the prospective foster or adoptive parent has been convicted of a felony involving:

(1) Child abuse or neglect;

(2) Spousal abuse;

(3) A crime against a child or children (including child pornography); or,

(4) A crime involving violence, including rape, sexual assault, or homicide, but not including other physical assault or battery.

(c) The State may not approve or license any prospective foster or adoptive parent, nor may the State claim FFP for any foster care maintenance or adoption assistance payment made on behalf of a child placed in a foster home operated under the auspices of a child placing agency or on behalf of a child placed in an adoptive home through a private adoption agency, if the State finds, based on a criminal records check conducted in accordance with paragraph (a) of this section, that a court of competent jurisdiction has determined that the prospective foster or adoptive parent has, within the last five years, been convicted of a felony involving:

(1) Physical assault;

(2) Battery; or,

(3) A drug-related offense.

(d)(1) The State may elect not to conduct or require criminal records checks on prospective foster or adoptive parents by:

(i) Notifying the Secretary in a letter from the Governor; or

(ii) Enacting State legislation.

(2) Such an election also removes the State's obligation to comport with paragraphs (b) and (c) of this section.

(e) In all cases where the State opts out of the criminal records check requirement, the licensing file for that foster or adoptive family must contain documentation which verifies that safety considerations with respect to the caretaker(s) have been addressed.

(f) In order for a child care institution to be eligible for title IV–E funding, the licensing file for the institution must contain documentation which verifies that safety considerations with respect to the staff of the institution have been addressed.

[65 FR 4090, Jan. 25, 2000]

§ 1356.40 Adoption assistance program: Administrative requirements to implement section 473 of the Act.

(a) To implement the adoption assistance program provisions of the title IV–E State plan and to be eligible for Federal financial participation in adoption assistance payments under this part, the State must meet the requirements of this section and sections 471(a), 473 and 475(3) of the Act.

(b) The adoption assistance agreement for payments pursuant to section 473(a)(2) must meet the requirements of section 475(3) of the Act and must:

(1) Be signed and in effect at the time of or prior to the final decree of adoption. A copy of the signed agreement must be given to each party; and

(2) Specify its duration; and

(3) Specify the nature and amount of any payment, services and assistance to be provided under such agreement and, for purposes of eligibility under title XIX of the Act, specify that the child is eligible for Medicaid services; and

(4) Specify, with respect to agreements entered into on or after October 1, 1983, that the agreement shall remain in effect regardless of the State of which the adoptive parents are residents at any given time.

(c) There must be no income eligibility requirement (means test) for the prospective adoptive parent(s) in determining eligibility for adoption assistance payments.

(d) In the event an adoptive family moves from one State to another State, the family may apply for social services on behalf of the adoptive child in the new State of residence. However, for agreements entered into on or after October 1, 1983, if a needed service(s) specified in the adoption assistance agreement is not available in the new State of residence, the State making the original adoption assistance payment remains financially responsible for providing the specified service(s).

(e) A State may make an adoption assistance agreement with adopting parent(s) who reside in another State. If so, all provisions of this section apply.

(f) The State agency must actively seek ways to promote the adoption assistance program.

§ 1356.41 Nonrecurring expenses of adoption.

(a) The amount of the payment made for nonrecurring expenses of adoption shall be determined through agreement between the adopting parent(s) and the State agency administering the program. The agreement must indicate the nature and amount of the nonrecurring expenses to be paid.

(b) The agreement for nonrecurring expenses may be a separate document or a part of an agreement for either State or Federal adoption assistance payments or services. The agreement for nonrecurring expenses must be signed prior to the final decree of adoption, with two exceptions:

(1) Cases in which the final decree of adoption was entered into on or after January 1, 1987 and within six months after the effective date of the final rule; or

(2) Cases in which a final decree was entered into before January 1, 1987 but nonrecurring adoption expenses were paid after January 1, 1987.

(c) There must be no income eligibility requirement (means test) for adopting parents in determining whether payments for nonrecurring expenses of adoption shall be made. However, parents cannot be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses for which they have otherwise been reimbursed.

(d) For purposes of payment of nonrecurring expenses of adoption, the State must determine that the child is a ''child with special needs'' as defined in section 473(c) of the Act, and that the child has been placed for adoption in accordance with applicable State and local laws; the child need not meet the categorical eligibility requirements at section 473(a)(2).

(e)(1) The State agency must notify all appropriate courts and all public and licensed private nonprofit adoption agencies of the availability of funds for the nonrecurring expenses of adoption of children with special needs as well as where and how interested persons may apply for these funds. This information should routinely be made available to all persons who inquire about adoption services after the publication date of this final rule.

(2) The State agency must send a notice to all public and private nonprofit adoption agencies directing them to notify all their clients who adopted a special needs child between January 1, 1986 and six months following the effective date of this rule of the availability of reimbursement for nonrecurring expenses paid after January 1, 1987.

(3) For adoptions in which a final decree is entered between January 1, 1987 and six months after the effective date of this rule, or where a final decree was entered before January 1, 1987 but nonrecurring adoption expenses were paid after January 1, 1987, individuals who seek reimbursement must enter into an agreement with the State agency and file a claim with the State agency within two years of the effective date of this rule. For adoptions in which a final decree is entered more than six months after the effective date of this rule, the agreement must be signed at the time of or prior to the final decree of adoption. In such cases, claims must be filed with the State agency within two years of the date of the final decree of adoption.

(f)(1) Funds expended by the State under an adoption assistance agreement, with respect to nonrecurring adoption expenses incurred by or on behalf of parents who adopt a child with special needs, shall be considered an administrative expenditure of the title IV–E Adoption Assistance Program. Federal reimbursement is available at a 50 percent matching rate, for State expenditures up to $2,000, for any adoptive placement.

(2) States may set a reasonable lower maximum which must be based on reasonable charges, consistent with State and local practices, for special needs adoptions within the State. The basis for setting a lower maximum must be documented and available for public inspection.

(3) In cases where siblings are placed and adopted, either separately or as a unit, each child is treated as an individual with separate reimbursement for nonrecurring expenses up to the